Redditch History Society

Newsletter

Vol 8 Number 6
October 2026

A Word from the Editor...

As many of you will be aware, Philip Jarvis, one of our members, has died. Philip was well-known in the town and was a member of many local groups and organisations and was the President of Redditch Royal British Legion. I have put the Redditch Standard report on page 6. A railway enthusiast, he gave us a talk on the Redditch Railway two years ago. He will be greatly missed.

We have a number of ways through which we publicise the activities of the Society. I have given an overview on page three. In practice, the Society is successful, with a good level of membership, a popular range of presentations and a relatively healthy bank balance. However, there is always room for improvement.

The Executive Committee has agreed that any member who gives a full talk to the Society without charging a fee will be awarded free membership for the following year as a token of our appreciation. This is significantly less than the fee that external speakers charge. The Committee will ask the membership to confirm this by a motion at the April Annual General Meeting.

October Meeting

For our October meeting we saw another good turnout: 41 Members (including 5 new members), and 6 Visitors, making 47 in total. This is typical of our attendance as our meetings usually attract and audience between 40 and 50, mostly members, but, also, varying numbers of visitors depending on the subject.

Sadly, we were not featured in the Redditch Standard this month, but I am pleased to say that did not seem to significantly affect the audience numbers. It very is difficult to assess the effectiveness of one method of publicity.

Our October speaker, was, Society member, and regular speaker, Chris Jackson, who gave us another excellent talk. Tthis time he put on his philatelist 'hat' and gave us a talk on postal history both nationally and locally.. Beginning with a short introduction to British Postal History he followed this by The Postal History of the Redditch area from 1795 to1998.



Photograph supplied by General Post Office
(Their negative number P.7396, file 72)

This was a fascinating talk, and an invaluable example of social history, which I have tried to summarise, with difficulty, on pages 4 and 5.

Coming up....



Exhibitions and Events



The final exhibition for 2026 runs from Wednesday 14th October to Sunday 22nd November 2026and is entitled Freeform by the Westhope Lace Group. The group members bring Freeform to life with an inspiring breadth of imagination. The exhibition unfolds as a richly textured journey, full of unexpected techniques, sculptural forms, and expressive surfaces. It invites viewers to rethink what lace can be, offering a vibrant, modern re-interpretation of traditional lacemaking.

Coming up in December in the locally valued Christmas Fair on the 6th and 13th December., which will be previewed in the November Newsletter.

Details of events and activities at the Museum including costs involved can be found at https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/ 'What's On'



Next Meeting – Monday 9th November
A History of the Canal People and their Working Lives. by Tony Conder



The canal network of the United Kingdom played a vital role in the Industrial Revolution and at its peak, was nearly 4,000 miles in length. The canal boat workers were a vital part of the canal network's operation, and their work was characterised by long hours, physical labour, and a close-knit community culture. Some worked for carrying companies, with others being boatmen who owned or leased their boats. The history of these workers, who often lived with their families on the boat, is a fascinating story and should prove an interesting presentation.

Tony Conder served as museum curator for British Waterways and the Waterway Trust for 25 years. His talks are noted for being engaging, well-illustrated, and rich in historical detail .

and yet another word from the editor!

As you may have noticed, there was no feature about our latest meeting in the Redditch Standard. Unfortunately, we have lost our contact at the paper, who has now moved on. So, we can no longer rely on the newspaper to publicise our meetings. However, that may change and Pat will continue to send our press releases.
Judging from this month's attendance the impact was not enormous, but even one additional visitor is significant, and we really do like to have support from our local newspapers.
Publicity is essential to the continued success of any small organisation, yet it can be particularly challenging to achieve. The methods currently available to us, and which are under our direct control, are:

- Our website, which has all details of our programme, downloads of the newsletter and information on the Society.
- Our programme leaflet, which is distributed to members and made available through local outlets such as Redditch Library, the Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Needle Museum.
- Updates on our Facebook page, promoting forthcoming meetings, the Newsletter, and other Society activities.
- Since moving our website to WordPress, I can also publish the equivalent of our Facebook updates on the website's News page.
- As members of the Worcestershire Local History Forum (WLHF), our meetings are included in the Forum's monthly What's on in Worcestershire update, the database of Worcestershire societies and, if we provide an article (we usually do!), in the bi-annual Forum Focus. As the WLHF webmaster, I ensure that the Society receives appropriate publicity, although I must, of course, balance this with the needs of other Worcestershire Societies.
- We are also members of BALH, the British Association for Local History, primarily for their very good value event insurance, essential for our meetings, but this also means that we are on their list of History Societies and, as they receive our Newsletter, which occasionally features in their journals.

These are the steps we currently take to promote the Society and its activities. However, I would be very pleased to hear any suggestions members may have for increasing our publicity (at no cost or significant effort!) and reaching a wider audience.

Report by Anthony Green
Meeting on Monday 12th October.
Through the Letterbox By Chris Jackson (1 of 2)



Above –The First Five Post Roads

Below - 1837 Birmingham Coach



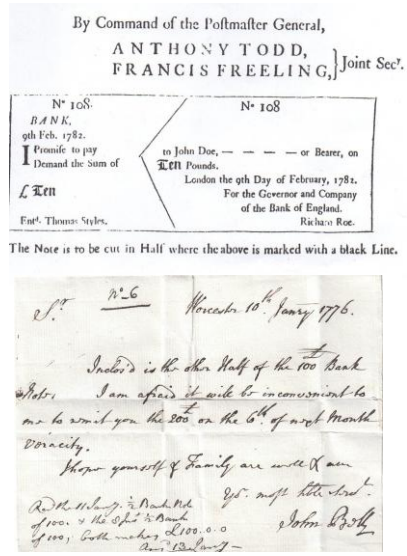
It was a pleasure to welcome **Chris Jackson** back to the Society. In previous years, Chris has used postcards from his extensive collection to provide fascinating tours of old Redditch. This year, however, he appeared in a different guise: as a serious philatelist and member of the Redditch Philatelic Society, presenting an absorbing talk on the history of the postal system.

Chris began with a brief overview of British postal history, tracing its origins back to 1635 and the establishment of the King's Post under King Charles I. He then guided us through the postal history of Redditch from 1795 to 1998, drawing on material from his remarkable archive to illustrate how local postal services developed and changed over more than two centuries.

The story began in 1635, when the King's Post was opened to the public. Postal charges were based on distance, costing 2d for journeys of up to 80 miles and 3d for greater distances. There were five main postal routes throughout the country, and all mail had to pass through London. Unlike today, the recipient paid the postage charge.

Mail was transported by mail coach, with letters secured in a locked box at the rear. The sole Royal Mail employee on board was an armed guard whose responsibility was to protect the mail. The importance placed on maintaining postal services was illustrated by the fate of the Birmingham mail coach during the severe winter of 1837. When the coach became stranded in deep snow, the guard and coachmen took the horses and mail onward to keep to the postal schedule. When rescuers finally reached the stranded coach five days later, all of the passengers had perished.

No account of postal history would be complete without mentioning **Sir Rowland Hill**, widely regarded as the father of the modern postal system. Hill advocated a uniform postal rate and was eventually entrusted with implementing the reform. The Uniform Fourpenny Post was introduced on 5 December 1839, reducing postal charges considerably, and was followed on 10 January 1840 by the Uniform Penny Post. The introduction of the famous Penny Black and Twopenny Blue stamps revolutionised postal communication across Britain.


By Command of the Postmaster General,
ANTHONY TODD,
FRANCIS FREELING, } Joint Secr.

N° 108
BANK,
9th Feb. 1782.
I Promise to pay
Demand the Sum of
£ Ten
Ent. Thomas Styles.

N° 108
to John Doe, — — — — or Bearer, on
Ten Pounds.
London the 9th Day of February, 1782.
For the Governor and Company
of the Bank of England.
Richard Roe.

The Note is to be cut in Half where the above is marked with a black Line.

Above –Sending money by post :The top image shows how the £10 note was to be cut in half, the first half was sent and then the recipient sent an acknowledgement of receipt, and the second half was then sent

Below -Sir Rowland Hill


Sir Rowland Hill

Report by Anthony Green
Meeting on Monday 12th October
Through the Letterbox By Chris Jackson (2 of 2)



Above –17th Nov 1857 / 26th July 1884 bereavement letters

Below – E.A. Hodges advertising envelope – typical of the periodf



Closer to home, Chris revealed that the first recorded Postmaster of Redditch was **Thomas Mince**, appointed in 1822. By 1829 he was operating from Unicorn Hill. In 1835 he was succeeded by **Miss Elizabeth Taylor**, whose post office was situated at the corner of Church Road and Church Green West. Evidence suggests that a post office existed in Redditch long before 1822.

Chris displayed a remarkable letter dated September 1815, sent to the Postmaster General and signed by 25 prominent local residents. The petition requested that the mail coach deliver mail directly to Redditch rather than leaving it at the White Hart Inn in Headless Cross. The letter also noted that the individual collecting the mail "must be armed" owing to the allegedly unruly behaviour of some local inhabitants, many of whom were employed in the town's needle-making industries.

The introduction of the Penny Black in May 1840 marked another milestone. As the world's first adhesive postage stamp used in a public postal system, it transformed the way mail was handled. Initially, letters bearing the Penny Black were cancelled with a red postmark, but this proved easy to remove. The cancellation colour was subsequently changed to black, leading to the replacement of the Penny Black by the Penny Red in February 1841.

Chris covered a wide range of other topics connected with Redditch's postal history. These included special advertising envelopes, memorial envelopes, in which the thickness of the black border reflected the closeness of the sender's relationship to the deceased, and an astonishing variety of franked envelopes sent to and received from all corners of the globe.

No brief report can truly do justice to the wealth of information and fascinating material presented during the evening. Suffice it to say that Chris's talk was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

For those inspired to explore the subject further, the **Redditch Philatelic Society** meets at the **Bridge Memorial Hall** on the first Thursday evening of each month.



Above –29th October 1840 (Red cancellation
22nd March 1841 (Black cancellation))

Below - 30th December 1845
(small packet to Spain)



Chris illustrated his presentation with nearly ninety images, many of which were from his own postal history collection. I had access to his presentation in order to optimise it for the screens at the Oasis Church, and I have used some images from his presentation. Please do not copy and use any of these images without his permission.



Tributes have been paid to Redditch community champion Philip Jarvis. Picture by Marcus Mingins. Copyright Bullivant Media Group Ltd.

Redditch has lost a giant with the death of community champion Philip

Tributes for former RBL president

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

TRIBUTES have been paid to a Redditch community champion who has died.

Philip Jarvis was well-known in the town and a member of many organisations.

Philip was president of Redditch Royal British Legion (RBL) and his father, Kevin Baylis Jarvis, was one of the original members of the town's branch.

President Philip gave a speech at the Redditch branch's 105th anniversary in the town, on June 5, when a 'right royal knees-up' celebratory event was held at Bridley Moor Social Club, the home of the RBL branch. The social club also features The Jarvis Room, which is dedicated to Philip's father.

The Redditch RBL president was also an active member of Redditch History Society, an expert on railways, a dedicated West Bromwich Albion fan and an organist at St Philip's Church, in Webheath.

Philip was also a supporter of Redditch Local Museum.

Those paying tribute to Philip included Elaine Whitfield, the church and mission support co-ordinator for the Redditch mission area.

Elaine said: "Philip was a talented organist who played at St Stephen's for many years.

"I had the privilege of working alongside him during my seven years as church warden. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word: professional, kind and a valued colleague.

"He will be greatly missed and remembered with affection."

Rev Canon Paul Lawlor said: "Philip played a huge part in so many parts of life in Redditch.

"His quiet faith shone through in the way he valued service before self – the motto of the Royal British Legion, which he served passionately over many years.

"I worked with Philip in this and in his organ playing at St Stephen's and St Philip's, at Sunday services and whenever called upon.

"I was conscious of his other passions: trains – full sized and model – local history and West Bromwich Albion, the latter being a burden we both bore.

"Philip and Julie were a fixture at so many services over the years and I will miss Philip's presence and his gentle wit.

"May he rest in peace."

Redditch MP Chris Bloore said: "I was honoured to bring the armed forces minister, Al Carns MP, to officially open The Jarvis Room at the RBL's new permanent home at the Bridley Moor and Batchley Social Club.

"I'll forever be grateful for the work Philip did to keep the memory of fallen servicemen alive and for our chats on the Poppy Appeal stall. Redditch has lost a giant, someone whose name and contribution will never be forgotten."

Local history enthusiast Derek Coombes said: "Philip was a great supporter of Redditch local history and he made sure the town, and important elements of its past were remembered.

"He also supported a lot of the local events and will be remembered for his work at St Philip's Church."

Posting on social media, Philip's partner, Julie Bradbury, said: "Can I just say a big thank you for all who came to the funeral and the lovely comments that have been said to me about Phil. The amount of people that came just showed how much he was thought of and had touched people's lives.

"I know he will be missed not just by me but by many others."

Redditch Indicator
Early Digitised Copies

The **British Newspaper Archive** is an online newspaper collection created by the **British Library** in partnership with **Findmypast**, the family history website owned by the Scottish publishing company **DC Thomson**.

As a Findmypast subscriber, I have full access to the archive, and it is fascinating to browse early editions of the *Redditch Indicator*.

I am a great fan of local newspapers. Unlike social media, they provide a permanent and reliable record of local events and activities. They also offer a fascinating insight into the wider world, as local newspapers of the past routinely covered national and international news alongside local stories.

The British Newspaper Archive contains more than 2,000 newspaper titles from across Britain and Ireland, with coverage dating back to the eighteenth century.

Among the titles currently included are from *Aberdare Leader* (Aberdare, Glamorgan), published between 1903 and 1999, to *Zozimus* (Dublin), published from 1870 to 1872.

The archive holds 513 issues of the *Redditch Indicator*, covering the years 1864 to 1911.

The British Library possesses an almost complete collection of British and Irish newspapers from 1840 onwards, largely thanks to legal deposit legislation introduced in 1869, which required publishers to supply copies of their newspapers to the library. Many of these newspapers, however, have yet to be digitised.

Although full online access requires a subscription or the purchase of credits, a substantial collection of newspaper pages from the years 1720 to 1880 is available to view free of charge.

To explore the archive, visit The British Newspaper Archive or Findmypast.



The Redditch Indicator

A NON-POLITICAL NEWSPAPER FOR REDDITCH, BROMSGROVE, KING'S NORTON, ALCESTER, STUDLEY, AND DISTRICT.

ESTABLISHED 1860.

VOL. LII—No. 2665. REDDITCH, SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 1911. ONE PENNY

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Our Post Offices .....

In his presentation on postal history, Chris mentioned the post offices in Redditch over time, and I thought that you might like to see that in pictures.

The first official post office was on the corner of Church Road and Church Green West. The building was later demolished, and the Redditch Benefit Building Society was built in 1922. Since the demise of the building society this has had various uses.

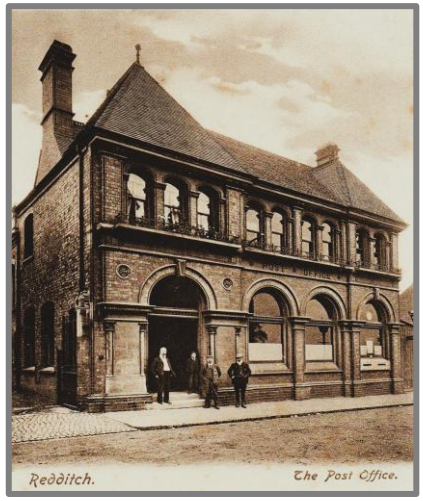
A new Post Office was built in Church Road in 1888. Other buildings, the Law Courts etc, were later added to give an attractive range of buildings. These still exist.

With the advent of the New Town Development Corporation the current post office was built in the 1970s in Alcester Street. This is of the typical red brick of that period.

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The 'first' post office in Redditch at the junction of Church Road and Church Green West (Chris Jackson)



The 'new' post office in Church Road (Chris Jackson)



The current post office in Alcester Street (Redditch Standard)

This Newsletter is edited and published by Anthony Green, Society Secretary, Redditch History Society and is produced on behalf of the Society.

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